

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
19th July, 2017**

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Albiston, Atkin, Buckley, Elliot, Jepson, Jones, McNeely, Reeder, Sheppard, Taylor, Vjestica, Walsh and Wyatt, Lilian Shears and Pat Cahill (Rotherfed).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, B. Cutts, Price and Julie Turner.

67. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

68. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no members of the public or press present at the meeting.

69. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone and formally thanked Brian Walker, who had now retired, for his work on the commission as a co-optee.

Pat Cahill and Lilian Shears were welcomed back for 2017-18 as the representatives from RotherFed and thanked for their commitment to the Commission.

Cllr Mallinder gave a brief update covering:

- Key items in the work programme for 2017-18: - culture and leisure, neighbourhood working, housing allocation and adaptations, and asset management
- LGA training in Warwick
- Visits to scrutiny in Lambeth and Camden
- Monitoring the new framework for Dignity
- Regular meetings with Cabinet, Strategic Directors and Officers
- Two way links between Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Improving Places.

70. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 5TH APRIL, 2017

Arising from Minute No. 64 Engagement of Young Tenants of Council Housing – RotherFed Scrutiny Report, Pat Cahill confirmed that the review report had been accepted by the Directorate Leadership Team in Adult Care and Housing and feedback would be provided on the changes that would result from the recommendations made.

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RotherFed's second review considering appointments, communications and the customer journey for housing repairs was underway. This would include a questionnaire, mystery shopping and interviews with officers and tenants. The review would be completed by the year end.

Resolved:- That subject to the inclusion of the attendance of Pat Cahill and Lilian Shears, the minutes of the previous meeting held on 5th April, 2017, be approved as a correct record.

71. REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES AND SUB-GROUPS

Councillor Sheppard would keep a watching brief on developments with regard to District Heating through liaison with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the three Swinton Ward Councillors.

Resolved:- That a full list of representatives on outside bodies and sub-groups be circulated to Members.

72. EMERGENCY PLANNING - TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Wyatt highlighted how recent events nationally showed the importance of emergency planning and the role of local authorities in catastrophes. The Emergency Plan had been activated in Swinton recently following a major fire, which had provided a good insight of how things operate locally.

It was confirmed that the review work had concluded and the draft review report had been circulated for feedback. This would be signed off at a final meeting of the task and finish group with a view to it being presented to the Commission at the September meeting.

The Emergency Plan was included on both the Corporate and the Regeneration and Environment risk registers as no full exercise had been undertaken yet, only desk top work. There were issues to clarify regarding staffing for the Operations Room and other functions but a good team of Forward Liaison Officers was in place.

73. FIRE SAFETY ON RMBC HIGH RISE PROPERTIES

Mark Nearey, Contract and Service Development Manager, and Phil Duffy, Technical Officer, Adult Care and Housing presented an overview of actions taken in managing fire risk at Beeversleigh and other Council Housing stock.

Beeversleigh

- Beeversleigh was the only high rise block managed and owned by the Council
- 12 storeys, 48 flats, both 1 and 2 bedrooms
- 2 passenger lifts and 1 concrete staircase.
- Recent investment £1.7m

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- Upgraded fire detection and installed a new sprinkler system
- No external cladding
- Current and up-to-date Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)
- X2 visits/inspections from South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (SYFRS)

Current provision of fire detection and safety

- x1 heat detector/sprinkler in every habitable room
- x1 smoke detector in the hallway, bedroom and lounge in every flat
- x1 strobe light in master bedroom
- x1 Hush button in hallway of each flat
- Heat detectors/smoke alarms automatically linked to Rothercare
- Fire call points in communal areas
- Weekly tests on communal fire alarms and regular cleaning of communal area

Other group dwellings

- x4 Council group dwellings - low rise two or three storey
- Shaftsbury House, Wellfield Lodge, Dawsons Croft, Hampstead Green
- Re-inspected with existing FRA and updated
- Annual inspection programme, monitored via the Chief Executive's Office
- Works identified to commence immediately, expected delivery 8 to 12 weeks
- Any urgent repairs have been resolved
- Further inspections and assessments taking place with SYFRS
- Rolling programme of FRA inspections

External wall insulation (EWI)

- 1,000 houses benefited from External Wall Insulation.
- EWI was in isolation is a combustible material
- **BUT** when installed in conjunction with the external render coating and the existing wall structure i.e. brick/concrete, it provided a fire barrier
- Class 0 rating - protects the surfaces from the spread of flames AND limits the amount of heat released from the surface during a fire
- Requested Fire Service to inspect products and installation methods – 1 storey buildings
- Building Control had signed off a statement elevating safety concerns re-EWI

Budget

Housing Revenue Account budget in place to carry out current FRA works

Further actions

- Review sterile communal area policy
- Suited key system to all RMBC service doors and risers
- Evacuation/Stay Put policy to be reviewed

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- Fire Safety training for staff to be refreshed
- Review location/information of residents with mobility issues
- Establish a Compliance Working group - issues such as asbestos, fire, gas and electrical safety, legionnaires.
- Review information given to tenants at sign up with regard to Fire Safety
- Review previous fires - lessons learned
- Build on excellent working relations with SYFRS
- Greater awareness amongst its residents regarding Fire Safety
- Continue to ensure every Council home had appropriate smoke detection
- Ensure gas safety compliance remains at 100%

Discussion followed the presentation with the following issues raised/highlighted:-

- Members confirmed that residents at Beeverleigh were more than happy with how the Council had responded swiftly to concerns following the fire at Grenfell Tower, with visits from officers and assurance given.
- The need for a common sense and balanced approach regarding tenants' belongings in communal areas. Officers would attend a future surgery to provide clarity for residents.
- Concerns regarding mobility scooters left in the wide corridors at Shaftesbury House rather than being taken inside people's home, thus posing a fire risk – This was recognised as a growing issue necessitating further work and consultation, but it was a fire risk.
- Fire appliance access at the rear of Beeverleigh due to metal fencing – It was hoped to have more double yellow lines to restrict parked vehicles although SYFRS had not raised the fencing as an issue during their visit. There was no access issue regarding the normal fire tender, but rather with the extending ladder, so additional hatching would be put in place with a trial run by SYFRS.

Following the review of the stay put policy at Beeverleigh how any messages would be given to residents – The FRA had confirmed it would be a Stay Put policy and letters would go to all residents.

- Awareness of their evacuation policy for residents living in the other blocks – This was also a Stay Put policy and this would need to be re-communicated to residents once the FRAs had been completed. Signage was in place saying leave if there was a fire in your flat or in the communal area.

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- Insulation on blocks of maisonettes – The insulation used was fire resistant. No checks had been carried out on these yet as the higher risk properties were being considered first but officers were confident that those buildings were safe in terms of fire resistance.
- Hush buttons allowed people two minutes to turn the alarm off if it had been triggered accidentally, for example by burnt toast, before it went through to Rothercare.
- Option to turn off strobe lighting for example for people with epilepsy – Officers confirmed that it was red rather than white lighting but they would double check if it could be deactivated for residents who did not have a hearing impairment.
- Gas installations in stairwells – At Beeversleigh the gas main was slightly away from the building with an external pipe to the sole gas boiler located on the roof and no gas boilers in the individual flats. There was also an isolation point and in the case of excessive heat in that room the gas was automatically shut off. The boiler was regularly serviced and maintained and SYFRS knew the location of the isolation point.
- Reporting safety concerns – This could be done 24:7 via the repairs line.
- The availability of £1m through the Fire Authority last year in match funding for social housing providers to fit sprinkler systems. In addition to the safety benefits it also meant re-build costs were significantly lower in the case of a fire if a building did have a sprinkler system. Plus it was easier to evacuate an individual flat rather than a whole building.
- If any FRAs identified the need for a sprinkler system they would be fitted.
- Fire safety in non-Council buildings where services such as supported housing were delivered or residential care homes – A joint document had been drafted between Housing and Facilities Management on actions to be carried out. The Senior Leadership Team received weekly updates on progress. More information could be provided for Members on non-housing related work.
- SYFRS awareness of location of dry risers, ensuring clear access to them and maintenance of the couplings – This featured in the walk round Beeversleigh with SYFRS checking every cupboard, with the Council having responsibility for maintenance and clear access.

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- Fire Services were well versed in dealing with difficulties at sites and had protocols and procedures in place to deal with problems.
- Customised alarms for people with particular needs based on sensory deprivation – The adaptations team would assess the needs of an individual before they were housed/rehoused and provide any specialist equipment.
- For properties above shops, FRAs were being undertaken with appropriate action if fire hazards were identified.
- Electrical wiring at Beeverleigh and any control over or safety tests on white goods purchased by residents – It was difficult to vet residents' purchases but there would be further discussion. A fixed wire test programme was undertaken every five years. In furnished homes PAT testing took place annually.
- Underground car parking in terms of fire safety – Hazards would be picked up and removed in the weekly visits to Beeverleigh. Other officers working in or visiting buildings were expected to report back any concerns.
- Inspections to wall insulation to ensure its integrity was maintained and advice to tenants on making holes in insulation and danger from sparks – The next tenant newsletter would feature this and officers would be briefed and asked to report any instances of exposure and potential risk. Tenants should also write in to request permission for any changes to the building.
- Pleased with structural improvements made to fire safety but also reviews of past fires were important particularly given that vulnerable people were involved in many instances of fires and this should be included within the fire strategy – The Compliance Working Group would reinforce the message that this was about people not just properties.
- Wedging open fire doors and whether SYFRS could provide signage asking people to refrain from doing this so it was a clear SYFRS request rather than one from RMBC.
- Wider public communication on fire safety, not only with Council tenants.

Officers were thanked for their presentation.

74. TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Simeon Leach, Economic Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Regeneration and Environment Services gave a detailed powerpoint presentation on the Rotherham Town Centre Masterplan. Earlier work under the Renaissance Programme was referenced to set the context.

Last year the Supplementary Planning Document identified potential sites and the draft Town Centre Masterplan would go to Cabinet in September.

Masterplan approach

- Implementation focused
- Specific deliverable projects
- Ambitious... but realistic
- Commercially pragmatic... but bold

Shaping strategy

- Confidence in the town centre environment
- The arrival-to-departure experience
- More to do and see in a quality setting
- The 'WOW - that really makes a difference' moment
- More PEOPLE
- Capture latent SPENDING power
- A place for distinctive independent retail
- Retail is not the 'answer' – but must be nurtured
- Quality eating and drinking a key opportunity
- New commercial leisure development (Cinema & Hotel)
- More living in and around the Town Centre

Forge island scheme content

- 25,000 sq. ft food & beverage
- 60-80 bed quality hotel
- 4/5 screen cinema
- 300+ multi-storey car park
- Retail opportunity
- 120 apartments
- New landmark bridge
- New riverside park
- Vital link with Minster Gardens
- Hydro-energy on weir
- Potential New Theatre

Riverside residential

- Key ownerships
- Council land as 'market creator'
- Starter Homes - go early sites
- Critical mass of new residents
- 300 new homes
- Mix of dwelling types
- Private houses

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- Distinct market offer
- Design quality/price-point
- Riverside setting
- Potential bridge over river

Bus Interchange and multi-storey car park

- Funding secured by SYPTTE
- Refurbishment of Bus Station and Car Park
- Separate management of car park
- Ease of arrival and departure
- College Walk to be maintained

Learning Campus and Doncaster Gate Higher Education Hub

- Existing Rotherham College anchor
- New Higher education facility at Doncaster gate site opposite
- Develop learning quarter
- Maximise benefit of students in town

Implementation Plan

Accelerate Forge Island Opportunity - Top Priority & catalyst project

1. Core Peninsula Site/Riverside Precinct (the core development opportunity site)

The critical next step was for RMBC to appoint a development/delivery partner.

2. Former Magistrates Court

The Council to undertake feasibility/business case/funding work with regard to Theatre and Arts Centre.

3. The Eastern Riverbank Regeneration

The Council to work with existing landowners

Residential Development Partner ... and Early Delivery of Residential Riverside

- A further (different) partner for residential opportunities
- Includes as a priority former swimming baths site at Riverside site (market creating site)
- Other Starter Homes Sites
- Other Land RMBC can bring into Partnership e.g. Corporation Street CPO land
- RMBC to assemble sites to feed-in e.g. Royal Mail depot

Implementation Programme focusing on public sector-led projects and site assembly

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- This relates to the 'conventional regeneration activity' falling to the Council to drive and co-ordinate
- The markets refurbishment... Linked with the Third Sector Hub development
- Land assembly projects including the relocation of Royal Mail Depot
- Public realm/landscape projects across the town centre
- Public art/Lighting
- Parking proposals
- Other regeneration activity e.g. the on-street train-bus Clifton Park-Town Centre

Planning and Regeneration support to private development projects

- Council promotion, support and quality review of private sector development proposals.

- Doncaster Gate
- Interchange Area
- Guest & Chrimes
- Main Street

Capacity and skills

- Council promotion, support and quality review of private sector development proposals.

- RMBC need to bring together a dedicated team of skilled and experienced individuals to deliver the town centre development programme.
- Without a strengthening of the team at RMBC, the challenging delivery timeline would not be met and the town centre would continue to struggle.
- External support is likely to be required for certain activity.
- The positive approach to planning delivery in Rotherham was also helpful demonstrating a can-do attitude.

In summary

- A clear plan of what needs to be done
- Implementation has started
- Key 'sites' have defined roles
- Aligning public / private investment
- A challenging delivery programme
- But vital to the future of the town centre

Discussion ensued on the presentation with the following issues raised/highlighted:-

- Changing people's habits with regard to visiting and using Rotherham town centre when they were accustomed to doing things elsewhere – If we provide opportunities for people they will come and the quality offer that we do have already is used. One

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example will be cinemas as these are popular with young people. People want to come to the town centre but we need to give them the hook.

- Parking at Doncaster Gate – The health centre would retain its set number of places and there would also be some parking for the campus.
- Attracting more affluent people to live in Rotherham and encouraging people to buy the new homes, particularly in terms of noise and insulation – Plans were for a mix of housing, not only apartments, including town houses to attract families. Starter homes help people get on the housing ladder and were for under 40s, who would get them at a reduced rate and have to keep them for five years. It was hoped to attract more affluent people and the tram-train would be another benefit as property prices were lower in Rotherham than Sheffield.
- Attracting people in to use the services was important but services also need to be there to attract them.
- There were three phases to the plan, so what would happen if things went wrong part way through? –The offer was not yet as good as it should be and there was probably a two to three year gap to bridge, keeping things going in the meantime. In a time of hard retail trading conditions it was about improving the town centre offer before we have the “big ticket” items such as the cinema and discussions were taking place with retailers. There were some negative perceptions on street promotions and this would be looked at as well as possibly holding more events. No clear set phases were defined bar Forge Island definitely being the first and key stage which would happen and should help to draw people in, with the other phases following on the back of that. More work would follow on the markets, which were already successful, to keep them growing. Housing was under way and would be supported where possible.
- Mixture of properties was positive and it was good to attract families but with the higher education campus had there also been consideration given to attracting students, which would help with the economy? Also older people as studies showed the most successful, vibrant and healthy areas to live in were those mixed across all society – It was about attracting a mix of people including, in the longer term, attracting students to the town centre once the campus was up and running.
- Future proofing for flood risk to property at the side of the river although alleviation work had been carried out and contributions from private sector developers – A flood risk tool kit would be used for sites as part of the planning process. Flood requirements for

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Forge Island have been mapped out and costed. Once we go out to the market, developers would be aware of that and what they would be expected to contribute.

- Focus seemed to be largely on young people; had the older generation been taken into account as not everyone liked shopping malls and shopping was a means of social interaction? Car parking had been raised but what about improvements to public transport and the bus station? – The bus station did need work which SYPTTE would undertake with approximately £12m investment from mid-2018. The aim was to attract all age groups to the town centre but young people in particular did seem to be a gap. It was important to improve public transport links and accessibility but also to have the offer there for people who travelled privately.
- Rotherham was working towards being a child centred borough but did the plan take into account the recommendation from the Director of Public Health's Annual Report about adopting the World Health Organisation age friendly cities and communities accreditation?
- For the 300 homes, what would be the split in housing types and who was the target audience? – It was a mixed housing offer with affordable housing as part of the mix.
- The demolition programme was under way but there would be a lot of empty unattractive sites around the town centre, so it was important to try and achieve some quick wins. – As soon as sites were flat the intention was to start developing quickly. The bridge near the former Tesco site was frequently mentioned as a concern.
- Was there a height restrictions on town centre buildings – Yes particularly around Forge Island so as not to obscure the view to the Minster. There was dialogue with Historic England.
- The river was a key asset with great potential to develop around it – It was important that new buildings faced the river and had nice views.
- Competition with other towns and markets, including on parking charges.
- Slides from a seminar on SYPTTE last week could be circulated to all IPSC members which included plans for the bus station that had had significant input from Rotherham Youth Cabinet to address young people's concerns.
- Ensuring that the offer did meet the needs of the community, that it was vibrant and connected to arts and to other communities.

- The importance of a cinema in Rotherham to young people.

Several points raised required further information from Housing and would be followed up by officers to ensure a full response for the Commission.

The Chair mentioned having an away day or half day and invited Members to submit their questions so that the right officers could attend.

The officer was thanked for the presentation.

75. CULTURAL STRATEGY

Councillor Yasseen, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services introduced the ambition for the Cultural Strategy. Looking back over the last ten years the cultural agenda in the broader sense had diminished and it was important to embed this agenda across the Council in a more integrated and cross cutting approach because of the value and potential it brought. The Borough had some amazing things that needed to be well publicised to encourage people to access them and to build people's pride in Rotherham.

Polly Hamilton, Assistant Director Culture, Sport and Tourism, delivered a powerpoint presentation outlining the process for developing a Cultural Strategy. This supported the report included in the agenda pack.

Purpose of the strategy

- Shape Rotherham's vision for culture, leisure and green spaces, strengthening the distinctive identity of the Borough.
- Develop shared principles with which to embed quality, excellence and innovation.
- Build consensus about priorities for development/investment.
- Develop joint plans for cross-cutting themes/priorities, such as health and wellbeing, place-making, child-centred borough.

Strategic outcomes

- Economic growth: supporting regeneration, better neighbourhoods and place-making; building talent, educational achievement and skills; growing creative, leisure industries and visitor economy.
- Social outcomes: strengthening community cohesion, building empathy, reducing isolation, improving quality of life; enabling personal growth.
- Enhancing health and wellbeing: encouraging physical activity, strengthening emotional resilience and positive mental health.
- Transforming perceptions: restoring civic pride and rebuilding Rotherham's reputation.
- Financial resilience: delivering savings, increasing income from non-Council sources; reducing demands on the public sector.

Strategic context

National

Department for Culture, Media & Sport

- The Culture White Paper 2016

Arts Council of England

- Great Art and Culture for Everyone

Sport England

- Towards an Active Nation

Creative Industries Federation

- Industrial Strategy – a Blueprint for Growth

Regional

- Sheffield City Region
- Northern/People's Powerhouse

Local

- Rotherham Together Plan
- Economic Growth Plan
- Local Development Plan
- Children & Young People's Plan
- Safer Rotherham Partnership Plan
- Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Local

Views of Rotherham 2015

- 82% say well-looked after parks & public spaces is a priority
- 75% feel that having local places to go such as museums & parks is important
- 72% valued a good range of things to do for teenagers
- 67% thought a bigger range of low-cost leisure activities is important
- 82% want local businesses to grow and create more jobs
- 91% keen to make sure that older people stay independent

“Another likeable aspect of Rotherham is its parks (Clifton Park in particular) and other green open spaces which were mentioned at most roadshows, often with local references. Rural open countryside and country parks were also liked by older people, children, community groups and business leaders, with Wentworth village being mentioned several times as an area of particular local beauty.”

I like...“Rotherham's green spaces, the wildflower verges, country parks, tree lined streets; and Clifton Park is beautiful” ...“hidden amazing things like Wentworth Woodhouse”.

“There were a range of views about Rotherham town centre; positive views were directed at the Minster, Minster Gardens and neighbouring areas of the High Street. Those liking the positive aspects of the town

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centre were young people, council and college staff, and business leaders. Rotherham's history and heritage were mentioned several times, referencing Wentworth Woodhouse and other historic buildings. Rotherham United and New York Stadium were mentioned positively at most roadshows."

"We need to get back some pride in the town - to hear Rotherham mentioned on national media for good reasons, not bad."

Scope

- Includes the arts, libraries, events, attractions, play, sport, leisure, parks, green spaces, archives, museums, heritage sites, film and digital media.

Images of people taking part in a range of activities

Strategy development process

- Recruitment to Cultural Partnership Board
- Commissioned Support on consultation, research, evaluation framework, drafting strategy document, etc.
- Select Commission Review
- Officer Working Group

RMBC Input

- Member seminar programme
- Officer working group
- Administrative support to Cultural Partnership Board

How you can help

- Challenge - be a critical friend – provide challenge and support
- Champion - Be an advocate within other forums – ask where culture, sport & tourism can contribute?
- Connect - Make links between the Cultural Strategy and plans/activities.
- Seminars
- Suggest members of the Cultural Partnership Board

Next steps

- Business Growth Board 21st July 2017
- Cultural Partnership Board in place by September
- Working Groups established Sept/October
- Consultants appointed by October 2017
- Sub-regional conference January 2018
- Draft Plan by January 2018, Final Plan published April 2018

Discussion on the report and the presentation covered the following issues:-

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- Local authorities involved in the Sheffield City Region – Confirmation to follow.
- Terms of reference for Cultural Board membership seemed demanding and people would not always be able to commit for long terms – The current version was a draft for discussion based on other partnerships in the Borough and on cultural partnerships elsewhere. The intention was that people could stay on the Board even if their job role changed as they would not necessarily be there to represent an organisation but rather in relation to the strategic needs of the Borough in terms of culture and bringing a certain area of expertise and a network of contacts.
- Support for the refreshed Strategy as it was important for accessing external funding and also the importance of third sector involvement.
- Several Members highlighted important cultural assets in their own Wards and popular annual events and festivals across the Borough which raised the profile of Rotherham and attracted people who then spent money.
- Two areas to improve upon were communication, especially marketing/promotion, and making better use of existing assets. This would extend to working more in partnership with local businesses who benefit from increased footfall and with the press.
- Better promotion of Wentworth Woodhouse. – Funding through the Great Places Scheme for Rotherham and Barnsley Councils for Wentworth Woodhouse and Elsecar would contribute to this including through a destination management plan and opportunities to increase visitors. It had great potential but was also a challenge. A new chief executive has been appointed who could come and discuss future plans.
- The information in the report needed to be clearer and fleshed out before going out to the public.
- No mention of the Local Development Plan, much of which had been approved by the Planning Inspectorate, in the background papers – It should have been referenced but this stage was the process for developing the Strategy rather than the strategy itself. The Strategy would make those references and connections.
- Maintenance of some assets was a concern – Again this related to links with the voluntary and community sector as the Council would not be able to do everything on its own. So the challenge would be to develop the partnerships to draw in external funding and to have

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a revenue plan that ensured sustainability.

- Importance of a Strategy covering the entire Borough and all the residents, not just Rotherham town centre, and that it linked in with the vast array of activities in place.
- Scrutiny involvement at an early stage in the process was welcomed but further discussion was needed to clarify the approach.

The Officer was thanked for the report and presentation.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the Commission supported the commissioning of a Cultural Strategy for Rotherham.
- (2) That the Commission supported the establishment of a new external partnership to oversee the development of the strategy.
- (3) That the Chair discuss future Scrutiny involvement with the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

76. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 20th September, 2017 at 1.30p.m.